

**Minutes
Forsyth City Council Meeting
October 4, 2021**

Call to Order

Mayor Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation and Roll Call

Mayor Wilson led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Goolsby gave the invocation. In attendance for the meeting was Mayor Eric Wilson, Councilmembers Greg Goolsby, Julius Stroud, Mike Dodd, and Chris Hewett. Also in attendance for the meeting was City Manager, Janice Hall; City Clerk, Regina Ivie and City Attorney, Bobby Melton.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried with four votes (Goolsby, Hewett, Stroud, and Dodd).

Councilmember Lawrence arrived for the meeting at 6:02 p.m. Five members of council were in attendance for the meeting therefore all unanimous votes will be five votes (Goolsby, Stroud, Dodd, Hewett, and Lawrence).

James Green – Planning & Zoning Issues

Mr. Green stated he had discussed various code enforcement concerns with Officer Malone. He also reviewed previous conversations with Ms. Pierson. Mr. Green reviewed the various concerns with the planning and zoning meeting that was recently attended. He feels that planning and zoning processes should be reviewed; he has past personal issues with Steve Coleman. He further stated that members of the board should recuse themselves if prior personal issues exist with a citizen coming to the meeting for approval for any reason.

Public hearing to amend Article II (Hotel/Motel Tax) of Chapter 22

Mr. Melton stated the public hearing is to amend the hotel/motel ordinance; to update according to HB317. The ordinance will amend Section 22-22 to incorporate HB 317 and Section 22-24 to provide definitions that are in the new Georgia state law. The public hearing noticed was published in the Monroe Reporter on September 22, and September 29, 2021.

Mayor Wilson opened the floor in favor of or opposition of the proposed amendment to Chapter 22.

Mr. James Green stated he's in favor of the amendment to Chapter 22. There being no further comments for or against the proposed amendment Mayor Wilson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the ordinance as presented. Seconded by Mr. Lawrence; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of tax service agreement with Monroe County

Ms. Hall stated she received the agreement after the millage rate was set, tax digest was presented. An agreement has been in place since 2004; no increase since that time. Per that agreement the city pays the tax commissioner \$1.50 per parcel and \$1.50 to Monroe County per parcel. Currently there are over 2700 parcels that are billed on the City's behalf. Ms. Hall further stated the agreement presented tonight is requesting an increase up to \$4.00 to the tax commissioner and \$4.00 to Monroe County for a total of \$22,000 a year. Mr. Hall requested that Lori Andrews provide backup to explain the steep increase from \$3.00 to \$8.00 per parcel. Ms. Andrews was unable to attend the meeting but informed Ms. Hall that increased costs for postage and paper caused the increase. Ms. Hall recommended the tax service agreement not be approved.

Mr. Stroud offered a motion to table the tax service agreement. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of justice center agreement with Monroe County

Ms. Hall reviewed a letter received from Jim Hedges providing explanation as to the increase for the use of the justice center for city court. Ms. Hall stated that court is typically 3 to 4 hours when held. The bailiffs and deputies would not be needed for eight hours at any time. Ms. Hall further stated we should not pay Monroe County \$75,000 to hold court in the Justice Center that's inside the city limits. We can conduct court immediately in Aldermen Hall; security equipment will be needed. She also stated that the city has been billed for each court held since July at a cost of \$2100; recommended that we pay the amount based on the prior agreement and conduct court elsewhere.

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to pay invoices received since July 1, 2021 at the prior agreement's rate and to conduct court at Aldermen Hall. Seconded by Mr. Lawrence, the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Circle of Care request for handicap ramp access.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the request for handicap ramp access for Circle of Care. Seconded by Mr. Lawrence; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of street closure request for the Fall Festival on October 30, 2021

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to approve the street closure request as presented. Seconded by Mr. Lawrence; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of street closure request for the Hometown Holiday Parade on December 2, 2021

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the street closure request as presented. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Requisitions Greater than \$5,000

W. A. Kendall and Company, LLC \$31,662.00

Gresco Utility Supplies, Inc \$7,104.35

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the requisitions as presented. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

City Manager's Report

Ms. Hall provided the following report:

General

- Huge thank you again to all those that made the Open House/Dedication a success. I meant what I said on Saturday about the employees being so willing to step in to help and always asking what else they could do to help. We are truly blessed with some good employees.
- Department Heads heard a presentation from Kenan Godfrey on How Money Works and how his business can help our employees prepare for their financial future. The department heads liked what they heard, and we will be scheduling for Mr. Godfrey to make presentations to the departments soon.
- Fire Department maintained their Class 2 ISO rating. Congratulations to all those in the fire department that made that possible.
- Almost 2 weeks ago, there were at least 5 accidents on I75 in Monroe County at the same time. Our guys handled 3 of those accidents while the county was tied up working the others.
- Governor Kemp issued a Law Enforcement and First Responder Supplement Program which opened on October 1. We will be working to apply on behalf of our employees that qualify for this supplement. The funds will be paid to the City to be passed onto the employee through payroll.
- Full guidelines for ARPA funds have still not been released; webinars that I have attended have pointed out that any funds the City passes on to others is still the responsibility of the City and if those funds are not used correctly the City could be required to return all ARPA funds received. We have received ½ of our funding with the remainder expected in July 2022; funds must be obligated by 12/31/2024 and spent by 12/31/2026 so no rush to spend those funds at this time. There is additional State funding that was originally released for applications to be submitted and due by end of August, but the deadline was extended until end of October. Hofstadter has completed our application requesting to use those funds as part of our match on the USDA loan.

Mr. Stroud offered a motion to approve a pay supplement in the amount of \$1000 for those public safety officers and first responders who meet the criteria set forth by Governor Brian Kemp (see below); and to pay an additional \$1000 to those public safety and first responders from the ARPA funds received, and to pay \$1000 to all other city employees from general fund.

Governor Kemp has [announced a Public Safety Officials and First Responders Supplement Grant](#) using funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. This program was established in recognition of the sacrifice and dedication public safety officers and first responders have shown in serving Georgians and their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant will provide a \$1,000 pay supplement for all eligible sworn law enforcement officials and first responders and a \$300 supplement for all active volunteer firefighters in Georgia serving during August of 2021. Eligible organizations and eligible employees include:

Eligible Organizations: State government agencies and authorities, municipal and county governments, and emergency medical services agencies licensed by the Department of Public Health.

Eligible Employees: Employees of one of the above organizations serving full-time as a public safety official or first responder in a position requiring active certification as a law enforcement officer, jail officer, communications officer, firefighter, or emergency medical services personnel from the state from either the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council (POST), Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council (GFSTC), or Department of Public Health (DPH)

- Waste Management continues to have on and off issues; last week they did pick up all residential garbage on the scheduled day.
- The CVB voted at their meeting last week to request Council move forward with increasing the Hotel Tax from 5 to 7. I am in the process of reviewing the Legislation approved by the State as we originally submitted the request to increase from 5 “up to 8” and the Legislation was returned stating we must submit an exact increase and not an “up to amount”. I will keep you updated on this.
- I will be sending out the list of Board Appointments for your review. Except for the Housing Board, all appointments expire on 12/31. If there are any changes to be made those should be made prior to the appointment expiring if possible.

Projects

- Blount St CDBG – 14 months into what should have been a 4-month project; Norvin Place residents have been tied into the new line; once they were all tied in, isolated the old line once again only to find out the Kynette Church is on the old line; they will be tied into the new line this week, and hopefully that gets everyone on the new line that was on the old line. Final payout being made to Roberts Hauling as any remaining funds to be paid out will be out of City match.
- Railroad Ave 12” waterline – DPC began digging to tie into the existing hydrant at DOC only to find that the line at James St has at least 3 90* angles in it; we met on site and determined the best course of action is to remove that section of pipe and replace it with straight pipe, bore under James St and run line down Railroad Ave to the State Farm project and just beyond. Insertion valve was done last week and will be working to complete line installation as quickly as possible. Our electric dept disconnected the pedestrian lights while this work is being done
- Starbucks is complete and was scheduled to open this past weekend.
- Sewer line issue in Chambers St; videoed Kimball and Lee intersections and will continue to move down Chambers to see if can find any sites of stormwater infiltration.
- QT continues to progress but has not tied into our services yet
- Hydrant replacement at Main/Harris is on hold to determine our ROW and how to run line to new hydrant to be placed on northside of Main Street
- Locates for work on S Lee St have been done; work to remove and replace sidewalk and steps began last week
- Still waiting on the heavy-duty bands for the speed detection signs so we can move them to different locations; Mr. Lawrence submitted letters from two subdivisions request that we look at those.
- Mulching and ROW for electric lines continues
- City Hall – AT&T finally completed work that was reported as completed couple months back; Pellicano subcontractors still have some work to complete, especially the security door hardware installation; tentatively scheduled for all phone lines to be moved to new building on October 11 but that is pending all items relevant to being able to take payments, answer all phone calls and work safely are completed. Until all those items are complete, we will continue to operate City Hall accepting all payments at the police department.

Planning & Zoning

- Three different housing projects have been presented to P&Z; 2 were reviewed in August and additional information was requested with no recommendation being made. Those 2 along with another project were reviewed on last Monday with 2 being asked to amend their request and return and 1 being sent forward with a recommendation to deny. I am working with all 3 of these developers to get the information that P&Z requires so that these projects can move forward. The developers are Jane Pennington, James Green and George Emami. Mr. Green's project was denied by P&Z and will come before Council at the next meeting for a public hearing.
- Preliminary Plat for Fox Run (subdivision George Emami and Howell Newton presented) was approved by P&Z with condition that ingress/egress lane is approved by GDOT prior to Phases 3 & 4 beginning.

City Attorney Report

Mr. Melton stated a public hearing is currently being advertised for the next council meeting for a conditional use request by Mr. James Green.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Wilson expressed his gratitude for the support and good attendance at the open house ceremony on September 25th. He's looking forward to getting all staff in the new location very soon.

Council Board Reports

Mr. Dodd stated he attended last week's Golf Board meeting; rounds of play are down slightly. Reese Brunson has the court looking great.

Mr. Lawrence stated he's excited about the new City Hall. The Regional Commission meeting will be held in Macon on October 14, 2021.

Additional Business

Mr. Stroud expressed his gratitude for attending the Robert Knox Leadership Institute. Mr. Stroud also stated that diversity is needed on all the City's board; he challenged council to seek out people who are ethical and fair in that role. In closing Mr. Stroud stated that all are subject to laws and policies; we are currently in the middle of a pandemic. It's our policy in City Hall that all are to wear a mask while in the building. He would like to see the policy enforced in our City Hall during the mask mandate.

Mr. Goolsby requested a cell phone booster in the square of Forsyth to assist with no signal issues with citizens phones while in the City.

Public Comments

Mr. Green requested that all City boards be reviewed; if conflict exists with applicants and board members, they should recuse themselves. Mr. Green also mentioned the fluctuation of the electricity bills and that a walkway is needed at Union Hill.

Executive Session

No executive session was held.

Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.